

## *And All Creation Sings*



I have always loved the art work of Sheri Bruck Baldwin. This work is called "Nature's Tapestry." I am enthralled with the way she captures nature in its detail and perfection, but still conveys the artistic beauty and color of the Creation. She shows such patience in her work and is so conscious of the very small details. You get the impression when you look at nature through her eyes you see not a mere photograph of nature, but a distillation of its heart.

What a blessing it is to explore God's creation and come to know and worship our Creator in a deeper way! I grew up very blessed to be surrounded by family who loved nature. I remember my Great Grandmother finding a very large potato worm in the garden, and taking the time to carefully put him in jar with leaves to eat so I could watch him turn into a cocoon. My grandmother and mother also had this love for all of creation, and instilled the love and appreciation for all creatures in me from an early age. My brother, Todd, my mom and I have all remarked many times on the mark Uncle Donald had upon our lives. How I treasure the days spent with him left! My mother knew him in his younger days, describing him as incredibly handsome in a movie star way and quite a flirt. She remembers seeing him show up at their house in his fancy chauffeur's uniform, looking for all the world like a movie star, at the wheel of a fancy limousine. He had also worked as a horse jockey at one time, which made him even more romantic in my eyes!

But I have my own very special memories of visiting my great-uncle Donald on his farm in Iowa. He was probably in his mid-40's by this time, married and father of nearly grown children. He was still a tall, well-built man of dark complexion, hinting at the Native American heritage on his father's side. He was still very handsome! Perhaps it was his Native American heritage that caused him to hunger for the things of the raw earth. He was a self-made naturalist who preferred to spend his time exploring the countryside over working in the fields. His wisdom regarding the world of nature inspired both my brother and I to love and explore it as well! We were amazed that he could read clues others would pass by unnoticed. I remember him bending down, and calling us over as he gently pushed his thumb into the soft ground and boosted out a tiny toad completely hidden in dirt and holding a small twig over a pitted area in the dirt so we could watch a lion ant emerge to grab the bait. How did he know they were there?

He was never in a hurry to get to his "work" and always willing to spend the entire day with children who were an age many would have considered a nuisance. Uncle Donald treated us like the fellow explorers we were, taking us on adventures as we examined and exploring his world. He delighted to point out birds, wildlife and insects we encountered on our walks and shared his insights into their particular habits and behaviors. He gave everything he showed us in an incredibly fascinating revelation! There were no creatures too large or small to escape his notice. My sense of him, even at that young age, was that I was in the presence of a 'master' who had given his life to the study of nature and the world around him. I also had a real strong impression that Uncle Donald did not live up to the standards of industry and work ethic that were expected of a man of his age and responsibility.

He put such joy in all of the daily routines of farm life and took me into the enchanted world of his making. His dairy cows were named after brands of dish soap...Ivory, Dawn, Joy.... He had a pride of stray cats who followed at his heels wherever he went. Memories of his cats, named after beautiful women, sitting up on their haunches begging for a squirt of milk straight from the cow's udders; of being given hard ears of field corn and taught how to shell it for the cows; rescuing and nurturing an orphaned kitten which he later gave me--much to my mother's chagrin. All of the animals loved him, and he went through his farm chores with such a slow-paced enjoyment in his tasks gave one the feeling that to him, it was not work at all. Was he successful? Did he leave a huge inheritance for his family? Well, the answer would have to be no, but he did leave a legacy in my life and the lives of others. He opened my eyes to the world that God has given to us to watch over, and a lifelong respect and wonder in God's creation.

“All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,  
Each little bird that sings,  
He made their glowing colours,  
He made their tiny wings.

The purple headed mountain,  
The river running by,  
The sunset, and the morning,  
That brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,  
The pleasant summer sun,  
The ripe fruit in the garden,  
He made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,  
And lips that we might tell,  
How great is God Almighty,  
Who has made all things well.”

— Cecil Frances Alexander